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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ideas of how to unite global villages to help create a better world. Argues that it takes just two people to begin a conversation between countries. It proposes that e-mail conversations can take place between children in classrooms in two different countries. Another benefit, besides breaking down the cultural barriers for these school children, would be to have those in developing countries correspond with those in more advanced countries in an attempt to travel the distance between the "have" and the "have-not" children of the world. (JDM)

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IN MY SMALL VILLAGE

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Professor Hays is retiring after serving for forty-three years in a variety of educational positions. For the past ten years he has been the Chair of the School Counselor Preparation Program for the University of La Verne. He is a past-president of both the California Counseling and Guidance Association (now the California Association for Counseling and Development) and the American School Counselor Association.

Education is a major key to unlocking the future for the entire human race. Education has enabled us to create the technology that has made it possible to "shrink" the world into smaller and smaller arenas of activity. As a result, it is imperative for us to engage in creating productive relationships with people of all cultures. Therefore, we must come to know each other; and we need to begin now. It is possible to do this through our schools.

Consider what the school of the future in developed countries will look like. It will be located anywhere as long as there is access to technology. The traditional school of the past with a teacher presiding before a group of students is insufficient to meet tomorrow's challenges. Only in those developing countries struggling to meet the challenges of the new century will we see the traditional style of education. New schooling will take place in offices, factories, stores, etc.--any place where we can tap into the communication devices that will allow us to connect with each other. Literally, we can reach out and touch someone nearly any place in the world.

Getting to know each other requires a personal touch. It is not enough to have knowledge about one's race, one's ethnicity, one's country or region of the world. We must come to know each other person-to-person. When I to sit down and interact with you on a personal level, I become aware of who you are. I learn about and understand your values, your beliefs, and how you manage your day-to-day activities. Knowing each other at a very personal level means that we can begin to shed our suspicions of each other. We live in a closed system. All we have is right here, right now, on this planet. Every ten seconds the world population increases by 27 people. With a small planet and a large population, each of us wants to lead successful and meaningful lives--not only for ourselves but also for our children and our children's children. Therefore, we have to learn to become neighbors in a small village.

Once I met a man. He was of an indeterminate age but appeared to be very old. It was obvious that he had seen a lifetime of experiences. Looking into his eyes I could tell that he still had a very sharp mind. In a husky voice he said that he wanted to tell me a story. I listened.

> "Once upon a time I lived in a small village. It was the only home and village that I knew. I had parents who loved me and taught me many things. I developed my sense of worth, my beliefs, and my values from absorbing my family's heritage as it was passed down to

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me from previous generations. All the knowledge that I knew came from my parents until I began to know my neighbors. As I ventured out of doors I met families who lived next door and nearby. My neighbors next door had many similar values but there were some differences also. I learned to deal with the differences in a variety of ways. Some differences I accepted as is. Some I adopted as my own or I adapted them to my value system. Some, I must admit, I fought over. There were times when my neighbor and I could not deal with our differences and we fought each other, convinced that each of us was right. But, in general, we continued to live in harmony in my small village. It was our whole world.

"There were other small villages some distance from ours but I had little, if any, contact with these outsiders. The elders of my village provided whatever protection I needed from these strange people. Occasionally, strangers would enter my village, usually to trade their goods for our goods. We prized what they had and they in turn prized what we had. These strangers spoke funny and dressed funny. My friends and I would often laugh at them. After all, they were different from us and we knew that we were better than they were.

"If our values, our beliefs, our language, differed among these strangers, we reacted often in a violent manner not knowing how to interact with them appropriately and peacefully. Through the interchange of ideas and goods we began to learn about a wider world than our small village--a world greater than we had ever known. We began to travel to other places to see and mingle with other people. But still, the differences in our values, our beliefs, and our language prevented us from accepting one another as equals. As long as we knew that we could retreat to our village, we did not care about others.

"Now, however, my little village has grown. Working with other villages, we became a country. And we discovered other countries. Through many new things we came closer together. What were known as independent, isolated countries similar to separate villages of old, became interlocking entities that are both independent and interdependent.

"We came to know that through our schools and from our learned elders, we might find ways to get along with our neighbors and to become a global community not too different from our small village. If we could become open to learning, we could become open to others. The future of our existence is in our learning to achieve a peaceful, collegial global community. New technology has reduced the time/space factor that existed in the past among countries of the world, and now we are close neighbors. It is necessary to think globally and act locally. With advancing technology, this is possible."

With that, the old man closed his eyes and drifted into a deep sleep. I was left to ponder how our global villages could become united for a better world. And then an idea came to me. I propose that we begin to relate in a global community by taking one small step at a time. I promise that I will locate an elementary school classroom of third grade students where there is access to the Internet. You need to promise that you will do the same. We will begin a person-to-person communication in which each child in my country and each child in your country will establish a regular e-mail communication on a weekly basis. Under the guidance of a master

teacher/facilitator, the beginning dialogue would be structured to ensure that each child is learning about the other child. Later, as each classroom becomes more technology oriented, the exchange of photos over the Internet could take place. Before long we will have interactive Internet in which instantaneous transmission of daily activities from one classroom to another would take place.

There is a problem, however. Dr. Evraiff talked about reducing the world's population to a village of 100 people and he indicated that no one in the village would own a computer! This means that most of today's technology is found only in the most advanced technology societies. We are privileged to live in communities where technology is well established and within easy reach of most of our citizens. We need to reach out in non-technological ways to learn about people living in less endowed areas. We must find ways to reduce the widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." We need to find ways to communicate with those who do not have the technology we possess. In the meantime, there is much work to be done and we must begin.

Just as a child becomes a friend with a child in another classroom in his or her own country, so will a child become a close friend of a child in another classroom in another country. It takes but two people to initiate this process. They must make a commitment to making sure that the process begins. A Chinese philosopher once wrote that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Who is willing to become a team partner in this child-to-child effort in developing a better world to live in? Who will be my partner as we take the first step of an exciting and optimistic journey?